

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) joined with four bipartisan members of Florida's congressional delegation today to urge the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to reject Port Dolphin's Deepwater Port application and propose a compromise solution. Senator Bill Nelson and U.S. Reps. Kathy Castor, Bill Young and Gus Bilirakis signed Buchanan's letter asking the USDOT to approve the application, only if Port relocates its proposed pipeline from its currently proposed route, through white sand sources for beach renourishment, to an area to the north with no apparent beach quality sand.

"This compromise solution would allow the Deepwater Port to go forward without harming the local communities," wrote lawmakers.

On June 4, 2008, Buchanan was one of 15 Florida Members of Congress to urge the USDOT to reject Port Dolphin's previously proposed location of the pipeline, which limited access to white sand needed to replenish the Longboat Key and Anna Maria Island beaches in Manatee and Sarasota Counties. Port Dolphin amended its application on December 8, 2008, slightly altering the route skirting the near shore sand source but limiting access to future sand sources for Longboat Key.

"There is not enough sand in the current sand source to even complete Longboat Key's next beach renourishment project in 2013, requiring the Town to immediately begin spending taxpayer dollars, in a recession, to explore sand sources farther afield and putting it in immediate competition with Manatee and Pinellas Counties for sand," said the letter sent today. "This is completely avoidable if Port Dolphin were to simply relocate its pipeline to the identified area to the north."

The letter notes that Florida's west coast beaches must be replenished at least every eight to 10 years – more frequently in the event of a hurricane or tropical storm. Furthermore, Florida law requires that they be replenished using regionally-limited beach-compatible sand sources.

"Consistent replenishment and preservation of the natural white sand beaches would compromise public safety and severely depress the economy, reducing employment and tax revenues," continued lawmakers. "Consistent replenishment and preservation of the natural white sand beaches is necessary to prevent erosion and flooding, protect the public safety, sustain the region's economy and provide for the well being of resident and visitors alike.

"Rerouting the pipeline away from scarce deposits of beach-compatible sand necessary for beach renourishment as a condition of the Deepwater Port license is a compromise solution, allowing the Deepwater Port, which is supported by the local communities, to go forward without threatening the well being and livelihood of the citizens of the west coast of Florida."